

GLA Fact Sheet

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System

GLA Fact Sheet #050202

Veterans Health Administration receives high scores for veteran health care

The Department of Veteran Affairs recently released information compiled from nationally recognized patient and employee surveys as well as data from the Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations indicating that the Veterans Health Administration provides a level of care for Veterans at or above national civilian healthcare averages. This information reflects the professionalism, dedication and loyalty of VHA employees nationwide to provide the best health care possible for the men and women of the uniformed services, past and present.

The VHA is the largest integrated health system in the United States. It includes 158 hospitals, 696 community-based clinics, 134 nursing homes, 42 residential rehabilitation treatment programs and 206 readjustment counseling centers. In 2004, VHA provided care to 5 million veterans.

Nearly 200,000 employees serve veterans through their work in VHA. In addition, 20,000 medical students and 30,000 residents serve and receive training in VA facilities annually. VA medical centers have affiliations with 107 of the country's 126 medical schools. More than half the doctors practicing medicine in the United States today received some of their training in a VA medical center.

The VA Nursing Service is the largest employer of nurses in the country, with some

38,700 registered nurses, 10,500 licensed practical nurses, and 9,300 nursing assistants currently working in the system.

Because of its public nature, the VA is perhaps the most scrutinized health system in the nation. Internal performance improvement efforts and both internal and external accountability are paramount to the systematic way VA insures the quality of the services it provides. Quality and effectiveness are best measured by a variety of tools that examine many facets of health care delivery over extended periods of time. This fact sheet describes some of the measurement tools used by VA for self examination and to make continual improvements.

The Survey of Health Experience of Patients (SHEP)

This survey is sent to 600,000 veterans annually and evaluates both inpatient care and outpatient care. Data from the most recent SHEP survey shows that in the 3rd Quarter of FY 2004 the percentages of outpatients and inpatients rating their care as Good, Very Good or Excellent were 95% and 91%, respectively.

The American Customer Satisfaction Index

The American Customer Satisfaction Index is a nationwide survey of customer ratings of goods and services. It is conducted by the University of Michigan each year and has



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included more than 30 larger government agencies every year since 1999. Two key outcomes measured are a general satisfaction index (the ACSI score) and customer loyalty. This tool is VA's primary source for private sector comparisons for Outpatient and Inpatient care. For the fifth year in a row, the independent ACSI found veterans are happier than most Americans with the health care they receive. Veterans gave VA health care a rating of 91 for customer satisfaction on a 100-point scale. The rating system's creator said the results "should be considered a benchmark for (federal) agencies." Veterans also gave VA's inpatient hospital services a rating of 84 and outpatient services a rating of 83, compared to private-sector patients giving their health care providers ratings of 79 and 81, respectively. VA also rated highly -- 92 -- in veteran loyalty, meaning that nearly all veterans under VA care intend to continue using VA and speak positively to others about their experiences.

Joint Commission on the Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO)

JCAHO is the predominant accrediting body in health care. On the most recent JCAHO Quality Report, the VA scores met or exceeded the national scores for JCAHO accredited hospitals in almost every category of care. Overall, for JCAHO Hospital Quality Measures the VA exceeded the performance of most organizations 58% of the time (with perfect scores 23% of the time) and scored similar to others 40% of the time.

The Veterans Health Administration, Learners Perceptions Survey

The Veterans Health Administration, Learners Perceptions Survey is a system-wide annual survey of physician residents and other clinical trainees to obtain their perceptions of their training experiences in VHA. This survey is valuable both in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of VA clinical training programs

and in identifying areas for improvement. The goal of the survey is to make VA a preferred training site for future health care professionals. The 2004 survey indicated that learners from all disciplines VA-wide were satisfied with their clinical training and gave it a score of 84 out of a possible 100.

Performance Measurement Program

VA actively manages quality and value through performance measurement. For several years now, VA has led the nation on 18 of 18 national quality indicators for managed health care organizations. These measures focus on preventive health measures, such as cancer screenings, health education and immunizations and disease management for patients with diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and mental illness.

For Acute Myocardial Infarction (heart attack) patients the VA exceeded the performance of most organizations 35% of the time (with perfect scores 27% of the time) and scored similar to others 64% of the time.

For Heart Failure patients the VA exceeded the performance of most organizations 82% of the time (with perfect scores 20% of the time) and scored similar to others 17% of the time.

For Pneumonia patients the VA exceeded the performance of most organizations 47% of the time (with perfect scores 17% of the time) and scored similar to others 26% of the time.

The VA All-Employee Survey

VA actively seeks input from employees throughout the nation on an annual basis and uses the feedback to achieve "Employer of Choice" status. In 2004, 52% of all employees responded nationwide (110,490). Those results were analyzed on national, regional, facility, and work group levels. Comparisons showed there was improvement on 16 of 17 factors from 2001 to 2004.

